

## **Who are P-Patch Gardeners? Results from the 2004 Survey**

As the 2006 application form lands in your mailbox, you may remember the gardener survey included in the 2004 renewal application. At long last, the results have been tabulated. P-Patch staff believes that this survey was better than at least the two previous ones. The form was simplified and we made a greater effort to capture SE Asian and Cultivating Communities' gardeners. Still we have about 1600 response out of 2000 known plot holders (or an 80% response rate).

Of those respondents, 383 or 24% were new gardeners while 76% were returning. These figures mask quite a bit of difference between sites. In Cultivating Communities turn over tended to be low except at High Point, which may reflect the start of reconstruction pursuant to the federal Hope VI grant. In P-Patches, the highest turnover in 2004 was at Linden, which reassigned half of its plots. This may reflect that Linden in its first full year of gardening suffered, as often seems to happen, a loss of the original builders. The lowest turnover, surprise surprise, was at neighborhood gardens in high density neighborhoods, Eastlake, Thomas and Republican all had less than 10% turnover. The median rate of turnover was 20%, which is a little lower than 2001 when it was 25%.

Tenure in P-Patches is always an interesting subject because the perennial discussion between plot turnovers to accommodate the waitlist versus retaining experienced caring gardeners who often contribute the bulk of volunteer hours and mentor new gardeners. Figures for 2004 are similar to previous surveys. Almost half of gardeners have had a P-patch for 2 years or less (48%); experienced gardeners with 3 to 9 years in the P-patch comprise 36% of P-Patchers. We have had a gain of those with ten to 33 years of P-Patch experience. They make up 13% of our program versus 11% in 2001. Another remarkable shift is growth in number of gardeners without space to grow vegetables at home; this figure grew from 67% in 2001 to 76% in 2004.

Our gardeners as a whole are evenly divided in home ownership and living situations. The number of renters, perhaps owing to greater survey accuracy, climbed from 46 to 49%. Forty-nine percent of gardeners live in multifamily situations while 51% are in single family homes. These figures mask much garden variation. Some gardens in areas largely the domain of single family homes have large rates of single family residences and also home ownership. At Evanston, for example 63% live in single family homes and 68% own their home. At Hillman City in Southeast, however, 63% are in single family homes, but only 32% own their own home. Overall, ten gardens had rates of multifamily living greater than 75% (Greg's Garden in Ballard, Idamia in Madison Valley, Belltown, Queen Pea on Queen Anne, Thomas St. on Capitol Hill, Beacon Bluff, Immaculate in the Central area and Alki). At the other end, six gardens had rates of gardeners living in single family homes greater than 75% (Angel Morgan, Hillman, and Courtland all in Southeast, Roosevelt, Colman off of Lake Washington Boulevard and Delridge in West Seattle). University Heights and Fremont had the greatest number of renters (more than 75%) while Courtland in SE, Eastlake, Angel Morgan and Roosevelt had the greatest number of home owners (more than 75%).

A remarkable shift from the 2001 survey is the distance that gardeners report between their home and P-Patch. Thirteen percent recorded living within a ¼ mile in 2001, while 37% do today. Another 28% are still within a mile of their P-patch, up from 20% in 2001. Gardeners

use a variety of modes to reach their P-Patch; they bike (9%), bus (5%), drive (39%, which is down from 48% in 2001) and walk 45%.

Gardeners do read the newsletter. Half of gardeners report reading it usually or always (21% and 29% respectively), and 39% either never read it or didn't respond to the question. These figures are down considerably from 2001, but, again, probably reflect a better data collection. Individually, sites vary. Interbay reports a high 75% rate of always or usually reading the newsletter (perhaps because the newsletter editor gardens at Interbay?), while Magnuson and Courtland in SE have about 50% of people in the same category. Ferdinand, one of the SE Asian gardener sites, unfortunately has no one reading the newsletter as is true for most of the Cultivating Communities sites.

Economically, P-Patchers are as diverse as their community. 15% of P-patch gardeners have incomes below the federal poverty rate, while in King County, 10% are living in poverty. The median P-Patch family appears to be about 1.6 people, while median family income is in the range of \$30 to \$40 thousand a year. This rate is only slightly lower than Seattle as a whole, which reported median income of \$47 thousand in 2004, versus \$55 thousand for the county as a whole. Six percent of gardeners report using food banks.

Ethnically, the survey shows that P-Patch is successful in its goal to be a community gardening program for everyone, but it also points out areas for improvement. Program-wide P-Patchers are 77% of Caucasian, versus 70% for the city as a whole, 1.2 % American Indian (1% for the city), and 14.6% Asian (13% for Seattle). African Americans and Latinos, however, are not well-represented in P-Patches: 2% and 1.5% respectively, versus 8% and 5% for the city. A closer look at a few neighborhoods is illustrative. In Southeast which includes seven P-Patch and Cultivating Communities sites (Angel Morgan, Bradner, Colman, Courtland Pl, Estelle, Hillman, and Hillside) and is one of Seattle's most diverse neighborhoods, P-Patchers are 1% Native American, 18% Asian, 8% Black or African American, 71% Caucasian and 1% Latino, versus 1%, 29%, 27%, 32% and 6% respectively for the whole district. In Greater Duwamish, also a very diverse area with eleven P-Patch and Cultivating Communities sites (the New Holly and Rainier Vista gardens and Beacon Bluff, Ferdinand, Marra, Snoqualmie and Thistle), results are similar. P-Patches 1% Native American (versus 1% for the city), 69% Asian (45% for the City), 6% Black or African American (15% for the city), 18% Caucasian (compared to 25%) and 6% Latino (contrasted to 11% for the City). In 2005 we did enjoy some success diversifying our gardener base. Thanks to outreach efforts of the Marra Farm Coalition and P-Patch gardeners, Marra Farm P-Patch became almost half Latino, and in the Central Area we added Hawkins P-Patch, which thanks to outreach efforts of VISTA Sofia Olsen, added a number of African American gardeners to our program.

Backing up our often repeated assertion that P-Patches are a significant source of food, the survey shows that program-wide 31% of gardeners get 50% or more of their produce needs from their P-Patch during the months of April to October. By November to March, however, a hearty 10% still take more than 25% of their produce need from those hardy brassica family plants. Individual gardens vary as we might predict. At an urban site like Belltown, where gardeners have tiny plots and are often concerned about unwelcome human detritus, only 3% of gardeners gather more than 25% of produce needs from the garden. At big production gardens like Interbay and Picardo, almost 50% of gardeners get more than 50% of their produce needs from the garden in the warm season, and 6% (Interbay) to 9% (Picardo) in the

cool season. Cultivating Communities and SE Asian gardener bring up the produced used statistics for our program. More than 75% of gardeners at High Point Juneau garden and Ferdinand get more than 50% of their produce needs from the garden in the warm season, and at Ferdinand, still 50% of gardeners do so between November and March.

Gardeners share their produce throughout the program. One quarter of gardeners share produce once a week and 38% report sharing at least once a month. Two Cultivating Communities sites excel in sharing. High Point Juneau reports 57% of gardeners sharing once a week, while Yesler Terrace Ballpark reports 100%. At Interbay with their weekly potlucks, 81% of gardener share at least once a month, and of those 48% do so weekly. Food bank donations are another story. Program wide 34% of gardeners donate at least once a month, a figure which includes the 7% who give weekly. Quite a bit of variety happens at the individual P-Patch level. At Haller Lake, a stunning 76% of gardeners give at least once a month, and at the big food bank gardens, Picardo and Interbay, 62% and 67% respectively give at least once a month.

A couple of questions address the claim that P-Patches help communities build strong bonds. Only eleven hundred out of sixteen hundred gardeners responded to the question of how many P-Patchers are typically in the garden with you, but assuming that most of the non-respondents would have answered none, then about 67% of gardeners report at least one other gardener in the P-Patch when they visit (36% said two to four). Applying the same logic to the question about visitors in the P-Patch, to which an even smaller number of respondents, 39% said that at least one visitor is in the garden with them (22% said the number is two to four visitors). These numbers replicate the 2001 survey.

Why are P-Patchers gardening? Overall the reasons are spread fairly evenly among the choices. Growing my own food was the first choice of 34% of gardeners. The ability to grow organic produce, however, was the highest scoring second choice. As gardeners selected their remaining choices, they tended to evenly divide their reasons between gardening for a sense of community, for solace, for recreation and for communing with nature.

In 2006 gardeners and staff are getting a break; the 2007 application cycle will be our next attempt to track the lives and gardening habits of P-Patchers.